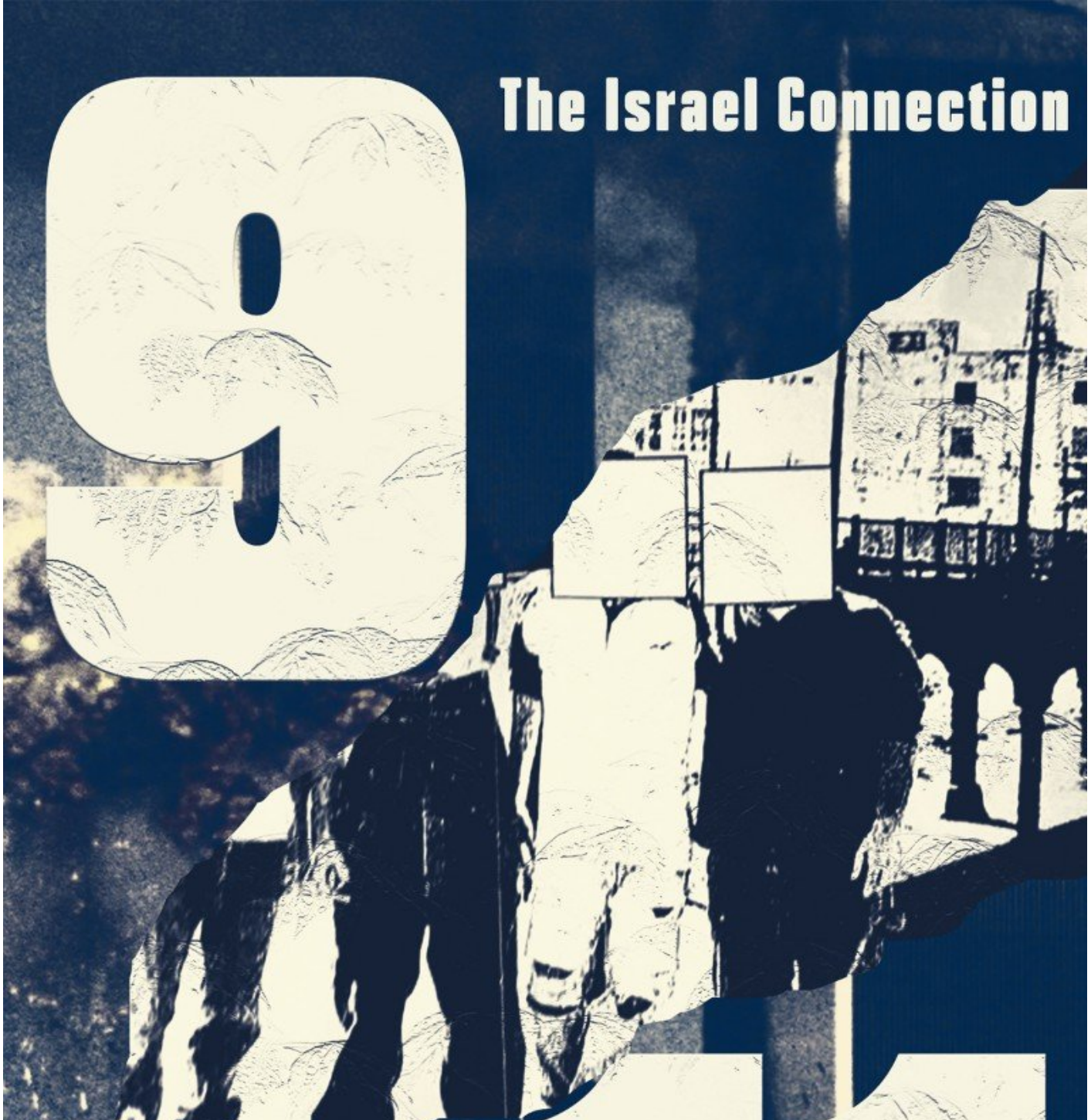
9/11

The Israel Connection



Gavin O'Reilly

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the lives lost on September 11, 2001,
and the victims of the wars that followed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The truth behind September 11 has not been an easy subject to approach. As such, credit must be given to those who began to speak out in the immediate years following the attacks. These include Michel Chossudovsky, the late Jim Marrs, and the late David Ray Griffin.

Just as September 11 has been a difficult subject to broach, so too has the topic of Israeli involvement in the attacks. For highlighting the Israeli role in 9/11 in particular, credit is due to Ryan Dawson, Adam Fitzgerald, Nelson Martins, Christopher Ketcham, Christopher Bollyn, and the late Justin Raimondo.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gavin O'Reilly is an accomplished writer in the realms of geopolitics and globalism. Since 2017, his work has appeared on *The Duran*, *Al-Masdar News*, *American Herald Tribune*, *MintPress News*, *Global Research*, *Popular Resistance*, *Blacklisted News*, *SouthFront*, *Off Guardian*, *Al Mayadeen*, *The Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity*, *21st Century Wire*, *ZeroHedge*, *Strategic Culture Foundation*, *Basira Press*, and *Black Agenda Report*. He is also the author of the self-help book *Fear, Anger & Boxing: Mastering the Mind and Body* and *H-Block International: The Worldwide Reaction to the 1981 Irish Hunger Strike*.

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INTRODUCTION

9/11 was the most significant geopolitical event of the 21st century so far. In the space of 102 minutes, 2,977 lives were extinguished in the largest attack on the United States since World War II. Unprecedented surveillance measures were introduced by the USA PATRIOT Act in response. The 'War on Terror' resulted in the deaths of more than four million people and the displacement of millions more.[1] The refugee crisis, perhaps the most pertinent political issue in today's Western world, can trace its starting point to 9/11. So impactful were the events of the day that the date itself, September 11, entered the lexicon as a permanent reminder of what transpired on that autumn morning in New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Therefore, owing to its magnitude and the countless lives impacted, 9/11 is an event that should be subject to the utmost scrutiny. Something that the official account of the day has long been unable to stand up to.

The belief that 9/11 was a false flag operation, intended to usher in a radical new US foreign policy in the Middle East and Africa, emerged in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. In the years that followed, it has filtered more and more into public consciousness. What has generally been underlooked, however, is the evidence linking one of the United States' supposed allies to the attacks. *9/11: The Israel Connection* seeks to shine a light on Israeli involvement in the lead up to September 11, the events of the day itself, and the global conflicts that followed.

THE OFFICIAL ACCOUNT

7:59 AM, September 11, 2001. A Tuesday morning like any other in Boston's Logan International Airport as American Airlines Flight 11 departs en route to Los Angeles. Within an estimated 15 minutes, the world would be placed on an irreversible trajectory to radical new arrangements in security and international relations.

At approximately 8:14 AM, as Flight 11 began to deviate from its scheduled flight path, air traffic controllers lost contact with the aircraft. Thirteen minutes later, at 8:27 AM, the plane crossed from Massachusetts into New York State, where it then took a 100-degree turn en route to New York City. At 8:46 AM, Flight 11 struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan, immediately killing an estimated 1,000+ people.[2]

Amidst the chaos and confusion, it would soon become apparent that this wasn't the work of an errant pilot. At 9:03 AM, United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower, instantly resulting in an estimated 600 deaths.[3] Having left Logan International 15 minutes after Flight 11, Flight 175 had reached its intended target in a similar timeframe, just as the international media was beginning to cover the unfolding events in New York. Millions upon millions of people were now looking on as the world was being irrevocably changed forever. After 34 minutes, news began to break through of another plane, American Airlines Flight 77, striking the Pentagon, resulting in 184 deaths.[4] All illusions of flight accidents were now well and truly shattered.

One minute before the hour passed, at 9:59 AM, the South Tower collapsed at freefall speed, engulfing Lower

Manhattan in a cloud of dust and debris. Four minutes later, United Airlines Flight 93 crashed in a Pennsylvania field, killing all 40 passengers on board.[5] It would later be reported that its intended target was the US Capitol Building in Washington. 24 minutes later, at 10:28 AM, the North Tower collapsed in a similar freefall manner as the South, again covering Lower Manhattan in a cloud of dust. In just over an hour and a half, almost 3,000 lives were snuffed out on live daytime television. The world stood still.

The most powerful country on Earth had just been subjected to the most devastating attack in its history. The only comparable event had occurred almost sixty years beforehand when the bombing of Pearl Harbor resulted in 2,403 deaths and the US entry into WWII. This was a watershed moment for the post-war generations. The relative peace and stability following the end of the Cold War had been shattered in one morning. The notoriously partisan political establishment of the US unified in response. One week later, Congress passed the joint resolution for the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). On October 7, the United States invaded Afghanistan, toppling the Taliban government which it had accused of harbouring Osama bin Laden. This marked the beginning of the decades-long 'War on Terror', which resulted in the deaths of millions and the destabilisation of the Middle East. All owing to the impact of September 11, 2001. A day of unparalleled magnitude, and one that raises many questions.

In October 2000, just under a year prior to 9/11, the Office of the Secretary of Defense carried out Pentagon MASCAL (Mass Casualty project) a two-day contingency exercise which simulated a hijacked plane being crashed into the Pentagon.[6] Eight months later, in June 2001, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) organised Operation Amalgam Virgo, which simulated a terrorist group launching a cruise missile or UAV at the east coast of the United States.[7] A secondary scenario also involved

the hijacking of a civilian airliner,[8] something that would become a grim reality just three months later. Adding to the prescience of Amalgam Virgo was the cover of its document paper featuring none other than Osama bin Laden.[9] Months before it had even occurred, cold water had already been poured on the notion that 9/11 was an unplanned-for event.

Indeed, September 11 itself saw the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), a less well known branch of the US intelligence services, responsible for the operation of spy satellites, carry out an exercise that simulated an aeroplane crashing into its Virginia headquarters.[10] Albeit this scenario envisaged it happening as a result of a mechanical fault rather than a hijacking.

Nevertheless, ANOTHER hijacking simulation, Operation Vigilant Guardian, was also being carried out by NORAD on September 11. This led to initial confusion amongst military officials when news of the real hijackings began to break through, with some questioning whether it was part of the exercise.[11] Another NORAD simulation, Operation Northern Vigilance, was also taking place on the same day.[12] Focusing on a hypothetical Russian attack on North America, the exercise took place in Alaska and Northern Canada, thousands of miles from the attack sites in New York and Virginia. The standard 14 fighter jets were on call to defend the entirety of the United States that day.[13] None were airborne when the attacks began. It is also important to note that as US military exercises, both Vigilant Guardian and Northern Vigilance would not have been highly-publicised beforehand, and certainly not in a timeframe that would have allowed for an event on the scale of 9/11 to have been planned.

Disturbing questions about the official response to the attacks on the day were also raised by the 2003 testimony to the 9/11 Commission by then-Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta. Mineta recounted how, upon his arrival at the White House on the morning of September 11, he was escorted to the Presidential Emergency Operations Center,

a fortified underground bunker where Vice President Dick Cheney was in charge. At this stage, both towers had been struck. An unidentified aide came in and informed Cheney *'The plane is 50 miles out'* and subsequently *'The plane is 30 miles out'*. When these notifications got to the 10 mile mark, the aide added *'Do the orders still stand?'* to which Cheney replied *'Of course the orders still stand. Have you heard anything to the contrary?'*. Mineta revealed in his testimony that the plane referred to was Flight 77, which struck the Pentagon shortly afterwards.

Only one logical conclusion can be drawn as to what this aide meant when he referred to the plane as being a certain number of miles *'out'*. That it was *'out'* in distance from a target that was known to the officials in the PEOC. This raises the question of why immediate contact wasn't made with the Pentagon to issue an evacuation order? Was there an intention, other than from the hijackers, to maximise the number of casualties on the day?

Indeed, nine minutes after the North Tower was struck, an announcement was broadcast over the South Tower's PA system that the building was secure and urged workers to remain in place or return to their desks. For some, this tragically proved to be the difference between life and death.[14]

In the days prior to the attacks, an unusually high number of put options were placed on United Airlines Holdings and American Airlines Group.[15] A put option is a bet that a stock will fall, which, unsurprisingly, is exactly what happened with both airlines following 9/11.

In a 2008 interview with citizen journalist outlet *We Are Change*, CIA veteran Robert Baer revealed that the brother of a White House staff member had attended a San Diego-based broker on September 10, 2001 and declared, *'Cash me out, it's going down tomorrow'*.

Baer had an extensive career as a CIA operative in geopolitical hotspots such as Lebanon, Syria and Sudan. Upon his

retirement he worked as an intelligence and security analyst for *Time* and *CNN*. An accomplished author, one of his books, *See No Evil*, which detailed his experiences with the CIA, was adapted into the Hollywood feature *Syriana* starring George Clooney.

As such, Baer's revelations regarding insider trading cannot be regarded as anything less than a damning indictment of US foreknowledge of the attacks.

Upwards of $5 Million was generated by this pre-9/11 trading activity. A sum that remained uncollected at the Chicago Exchange.[16]

The mystery traders behind these placements would not be the only ones who would benefit financially from the events of September 11.

On July 24, 2001, exactly seven weeks before 9/11, the Twin Towers, as well as buildings 4 and 5 of the wider World Trade Center complex, were leased from the New York Port Authority by real estate developer Larry Silverstein.

Silverstein was highly-connected to the Israeli political establishment. Among the business mogul's close personal friends were Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and former and future Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.[17] In the 1990s, Silverstein had attempted to create a free-trade zone in Israel's Negev Desert.[18]

Joining Silverstein in the lease of the towers was Frank Lowy, an Australian-Israeli business magnate who had fought with the Zionist paramilitary group Haganah in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.[19] Lowy had been introduced to Silverstein in the 80s by Norman Hascoe, who later went on to serve as president of the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA), a highly-influential think tank that promotes closer security coordination between the United States and Israel. Lowy had first met Hascoe on a Caribbean cruise, where over a game of blackjack, they bonded over their shared support of the Jewish state.[20]

At the time of the lease, the World Trade Center had become a financial black hole. The complex had high vacancy rates,[21] and was not up to modern building standards. In particular, the high level of asbestos in the Twin Towers was beginning to pose significant legal and financial risks. The cost of removing the asbestos from the entirety of the WTC was placed at $600mn,[22] a figure which dwarfed the profit that the buildings were generating.[23] Demolishing the complex and starting anew also would have been a costly endeavour, owing to the extensive measures that would have to be put in place to prevent the spread of asbestos. All were factors in the Port Authority seeking to privatise the WTC in the late 90s.[24]

The consortium led by Silverstein, which had decades of combined real estate experience, was undeterred by what seemingly appeared to be a massive financial liability, however, and pushed ahead with the deal to lease the towers. Just under two months later, 9/11 occurred. A tragic event, and one that consequently ensured for Silverstein and associates that no extra costs would be incurred through asbestos removal or a specialised demolition.

Having been offered a $3.55bn insurance settlement following 9/11, Silverstein successfully argued in court that the attacks counted as two occurrences rather than one, resulting in an increased payout of $4.55bn.[25] Silverstein used this vast sum to kickstart the development of the modernised One World Trade Center, and to pay off outstanding debts to his consortium partners, such as GMAC Commercial Mortgage, a subsidiary of General Motors Corps, which had provided a $563 million mortgage as part of the original lease deal.[26]

With Silverstein having initially contributed a relatively small figure of $14mn[27] to the July 2001 lease, the insurance payout from the attacks could be considered a significant financial windfall for the famed real estate magnate. This, alongside the fact Silverstein was due to be in the Twin

Towers on the morning of September 11 - amazingly, for a meeting on what to do in the event of a terrorist attack[28] - but cancelled at the last minute due to a dermatologist appointment,[29] earned him the nickname 'Lucky Larry'.

The experienced property developer's sought-after lease of the seemingly unprofitable Twin Towers, the substantial insurance payout he received following their destruction less than two months later, and his fortunate escape on the morning of September 11, were not Silverstein's only involvement with the World Trade Center that drew suspicion following 9/11.

In 1980, Silverstein won a bid from the Port Authority to lease the last remaining undeveloped piece of land within the World Trade Center boundaries. Four years later, work began on the new World Trade Center 7 complex, which opened to the public in 1987.

The only section of the original World Trade Center that began as a private development, WTC7 went on to attract a number of high-profile tenants. These included the investment bank Salomon Smith Barney, which maintained a presence on 27 floors of the 47-story skyscraper, leading to WTC7 being known as the Salomon Brothers building. American Express also had a tenancy in WTC7, as well as Standard Chartered bank.[30]

Major banking and financial players were not the only notable tenants of World Trade Center 7. Also located in the building were the offices of a number of government agencies involved in national security.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which investigates market manipulation, had its New York regional office located in WTC7. This housed 320 employees and was the agency's most significant operation outside of its Washington headquarters.[31] The SEC would later investigate the insider trading that took place in the days prior to 9/11.

The CIA also had an office located in WTC7, however, its presence in the building was far more secretive than the SEC. The existence of Building 7's CIA office was outlined in a November 2001 *New York Times* article, which revealed that it had been operating under the false front of another unidentified federal organisation. The CIA had used WTC7 to spy on and recruit foreign diplomats at the United Nations, and to debrief selected American business executives who were willing to talk to the agency after returning from overseas.[32] Owing to Larry Silverstein's ownership of World Trade Center 7, and his close ties to the Israeli political establishment, it is logical to assume that Silverstein's Israeli dealings were discussed with the agency, perhaps in a liaison role.

Alongside the SEC and CIA, the Department of Defence and US Secret Service also had offices located in WTC7.[33] However, clandestine government agencies maintaining a presence in a privately-owned business complex would not be the most questionable aspect of World Trade Center 7.

Following the collapse of the North Tower, falling debris struck the south face of WTC7, starting a number of fires that spread throughout the day. Seven hours later at 5:20 PM, World Trade Center 7 collapsed at the same freefall speed as its Twin Tower counterparts. On an already momentous day, this marked the first - and to date, the only - time in history that a skyscraper had collapsed solely as the result of fire.[34]

The official account alleges that WTC7's collapse came as a result of fire weakening the north east core column of the building, causing the floors above it to give way. This is an explanation that has had scorn poured upon it by numerous experts in the fields of architecture and engineering in the years that followed. In particular, the group Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth maintains that for WTC7 to have collapsed in the symmetrical manner that it did, all columns would have to be severed simultaneously. Something that could only occur through a controlled demolition.

Reports of secondary and tertiary explosions at the World Trade Center were recorded from at least 135 first hand responders[35] and 36 media correspondents[36] on September 11. Many of these accounts had a common theme of multiple explosions being heard in rapid succession from the towers. This is a pattern that is consistent with a controlled demolition. Three accounts in particular cast serious doubt on the official account of 9/11.

Just over an hour after the collapse of WTC 1 and 2, *NBC* correspondent Pat Dawson reported that FDNY Chief of Safety Albert Turi informed him that a secondary explosion had occurred in one of the towers. Turi suspected that it had been caused by a device planted in the buildings, and had resulted in a large loss of life. Shortly afterwards, Rick Sanchez of *MSNBC* informed his audience that the NYPD believed a van laden with explosives had been parked in the underground car park of the WTC. This was corroborated later that day by *USA Today* correspondent Jack Kelley, who reported that the FBI also suspected vehicles carrying explosives had been parked underneath the towers.

Three separate bodies independently coming to the conclusion that explosive devices had been placed in the World Trade Center would be regarded as damning evidence by many. The National Institute for Standards and Technology, however, saw it differently. Tasked with investigating the collapse of the three buildings, NIST did not test for explosive residue in the wreckage of Ground Zero.[37] A significant portion of steel from the buildings was subsequently sold abroad to be melted down as scrap metal.[38] Had devices been planted in the buildings beforehand, this effectively amounted to the destruction of evidence.

September 11 was a day that raised many questions in its own regard. This is before we even begin to examine the United States' relationship with al-Qaeda.

OPERATION CYCLONE

At the height of the Cold War, as both the United States and Soviet Union sought to maintain hegemony in their respective spheres of influence, one region was considered the jewel in the geostrategic crown.

Eurasia, the largest, most populous landmass on the planet, and containing the majority of Earth's natural resources, was considered paramount to establishing dominance over world affairs. Thus, when the previously Western-friendly Afghan government of Mohammad Daoud Khan was overthrown in 1978 and replaced by the Soviet-aligned People's Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Washington took drastic measures to redress the balance.

In July 1979, US President Jimmy Carter authorised Operation Cyclone, a covert CIA programme which provided arms, funding and training to anti-communist Islamist rebels known collectively as the Mujahideen. Joining the US in this endeavour were Britain, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Wahhabism, an ultra-conservative brand of Sunni Islam promoted by Saudi Arabia, was the de facto ideology of the Mujahideen.

As well as attempting to destabilise the newly-established socialist state, Operation Cyclone also served another purpose. On the day of its authorisation, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote a note to Carter outlining his view that Operation Cyclone would likely trigger a Soviet military intervention into its southern neighbour. This prediction came true in December of that year, when the USSR invaded Afghanistan in a bid to shore up its client state.

Brzezinski told Carter that the US now had the opportunity of giving the Soviet Union '*its Vietnam war*'.[39]

In February 1980, Brzezinski visited the Afghan border in Pakistan, where he addressed Mujahideen fighters, telling them '*your cause is right*'.[40] This marked the first public display of US support for the Afghan insurgency. The 1980 Moscow Olympics were subsequently boycotted by the United States as a result of the deliberately provoked Soviet invasion.

Though Carter lost that year's election to Ronald Reagan, support for Operation Cyclone had now become a bipartisan affair. Billions of dollars were spent on supporting the Mujahideen throughout the decade. Margaret Thatcher, Reagan's closest ally, also paid a highly-publicised visit to the Afghan border in 1981, telling the Mujahideen '*the hearts of the free world are with you*'. Leadership figures of the group were hosted by Reagan at the White House in 1987. Hollywood blockbusters such as the James Bond entry *The Living Daylights* and *Rambo III* featured the Mujahideen as protagonists.

By the time of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, Operation Cyclone had become one of the longest and most expensive CIA operations in history.[41] The USSR collapsed two years later, with many analysts regarding the Afghan 'bear-trap' as being a key contributory factor. The socialist government of Afghanistan followed suit in 1992, being replaced by an Islamic theocracy. In December 1993, esteemed journalist Robert Fisk, writing for *The Independent*, interviewed one of the most senior commanders of the Mujahideen, Osama bin Laden.

A member of a prominent Saudi dynasty that amassed its wealth through the construction industry, Bin Laden had travelled to Afghanistan within days of the Soviet invasion, immediately taking on a central logistical role for the Mujahideen.[42] Using his extensive wealth and connections, the

Riyadh businessman organised for thousands of fighters from across the Arab world to travel to take part in the Afghan campaign.[43] Weapons and construction equipment were also provided to the Mujahideen by Bin Laden,[44] in line with the arms already being supplied by the CIA.

In 1984, Bin Laden established Maktab al-Khidamat, known in English as the Afghan Services Bureau, which was to provide greater coordination in the recruitment process of the thousands of foreign fighters who were now flowing into Afghanistan. The same year, the CIA began directing the Mujahideen to launch attacks within the Soviet Union itself.[45] Brzezinski's vision of tying Moscow down in a military quagmire was now becoming a reality. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the USSR, where he subsequently implemented a number of reformist policies. Two years later, Moscow announced that it would begin a phased withdrawal from Afghanistan. Victory for the Mujahideen had now become an inevitability. The following year, Bin Laden established another organisation, intended to wage jihad worldwide, al-Qaeda.

In 1990, one year after the Soviets' defeat in Afghanistan, Iraq invaded Kuwait, threatening the stability of Saudi Arabia which bordered both countries. In response, Bin Laden offered the Saudi royal family the use of the thousands of Afghan war veterans in order to defend the kingdom. This offer was rejected by Riyadh, which opted to rely on a defence agreement with the US instead. Bin Laden was incensed by this move, regarding it as blasphemy to rely on non-believers to defend Islamic holy sites. The United States, which the Mujahideen had allied with several years beforehand, was now regarded as an enemy.

Bin Laden was subsequently expelled from Saudi Arabia over his vocal opposition to Riyadh's alliance with the United States. Setting up base in Sudan shortly afterwards, he organised for the 1992 bombing of two hotels in Yemen that had hosted US troops en route to Somalia. This attack

wasn't officially claimed by al-Qaeda until 1998. The same year, the simultaneous bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania resulted in 224 deaths. In 1999, a decade after Bin Laden had been fêted by the West as a liberator of Afghanistan, the al-Qaeda leader was now listed by the FBI as the world's most wanted man.

In October 2000, al-Qaeda bombed the USS *Cole* in Yemen's Aden harbour, resulting in the deaths of 17 US servicemen. Eleven months later, al-Qaeda carried out its most spectacular attack of all - 9/11. Almost 3,000 lives were lost and a radical US foreign policy was introduced in response. All seemingly because of an organisation that just over a decade earlier, was intrinsically linked to US intelligence.

Despite the extent of Bin Laden's wealth and influence, it is unlikely that the Mujahideen could have overcome the military strength of the Soviet Union alone. The arms, funding and training provided by Operation Cyclone were a decisive factor. Consequently, it is inconceivable that following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, US intelligence ceased to maintain contacts within the Mujahideen groupings and subsequently, al-Qaeda itself.

In July 2001, FBI special agent Kenneth Williams sent a memo to the Bureau's headquarters from the Phoenix, Arizona field office, outlining evidence that a significant number of al-Qaeda members had travelled to the United States in order to enrol in flight schools. Though the names of the suspects are redacted in the official release, Flight 77 hijackers Hani Hanjour and Nawaf al-Hazmi had both resided in Arizona prior to the attacks. Hanjour, who was at the helm of Flight 77 when it crashed into the Pentagon, had taken flight lessons at an Arizona aviation academy.[46]

On August 6, the CIA's daily brief to US President George W. Bush was entitled *'Bin Laden Determined To Strike in US'*. The document referenced previous television interviews with Bin Laden where he expressed his desire that al-Qaeda

would *'follow the example of World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef'*. Yousef had been the mastermind behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, in which a van laden with explosives was detonated in the underground car park of the Twin Towers. This resulted in six deaths, though the intention was to topple the North Tower onto the South Tower, which would have killed thousands.[47] The memo finished off by mentioning a suspected al-Qaeda cell based in New York and plans by the organisation to hijack an airliner.

In 2005, whistleblower Lt. Col Anthony Shaffer revealed that Mohamed Atta, the 9/11 ringleader who crashed Flight 11 into the North Tower, had been identified by his US military intelligence unit in 1999. Shaffer and four other members of the unit, codenamed Able Danger, were subsequently prohibited by the Pentagon from testifying before the US Senate Intelligence Committee which had begun an investigation into the claims. Shaffer later wrote a book on Able Danger. The Pentagon spent $47,000 on buying and destroying all first-edition copies.[48]

Despite Bin Laden's very public falling out with the Saudi royal family, there is also strong evidence that Riyadh had continued to provide clandestine support for al-Qaeda, which shared its Wahhabi ideology.

In November 1999, Saudi government employees Mohammed al-Qudhaeein and Hamdan al-Shalawi boarded a flight in Phoenix in order to attend an event at the Saudi embassy in Washington, D.C. While on board, both men began asking attendants numerous flight-related technical questions, drawing suspicions from crew members. After inquiring where the bathroom was located and being told that it was at the rear of the plane, al-Qudhaaein proceeded to the front of the aircraft and made two attempts to enter the cockpit. The flight was grounded and both men were arrested.

Though no charges were brought against al-Qudhaeein or al-Shalawi, the FBI later opened a counterterrorism investigation after it emerged that a terror suspect in Phoenix had been driving al-Shalawi's car.[49] The investigation found that al-Shalawi had previously attended training camps in Afghanistan where he had been instructed in the use of explosives.[50] The FBI also suspected that al-Qudhaeein was a Saudi intelligence asset.[51] Both men had told agents that the Saudi embassy had paid for their flight tickets.[52] In the aftermath of September 11, the FBI began to suspect that the attempt to enter the cockpit had been a dry run for the attacks.[53]

Ten days after 9/11, British police raided the Birmingham home of Omar al-Bayoumi, a former Saudi civil servant and business student who had been listed as a suspect in the attacks by the FBI. A home video was seized in the raid, which had been filmed by al-Bayoumi on a trip to Washington in 1999. In it, al-Bayoumi gives a running commentary on numerous landmarks in the city, with a focus on the US Capitol Building, the purported target of Flight 93. Security outposts of the building are highlighted by al-Bayoumi in the video, as well as cars parked outside, which al-Bayoumi mentions were referred to in a '*plan*'. Nearby landmarks are also taken note of, such as the airport and the Washington Monument. Upon filming the Monument, al-Bayoumi informs the unidentified recipients of his video '*I will report to you in detail what is there*'. A notepad featuring a sketch of a plane and flight calculations was also discovered in the raid,[54] as well as records of phone calls to the Saudi embassy in the United States.[55]

In January 2000, while studying in California, al-Bayoumi had met fellow Saudis Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Midhar upon their arrival in the United States. Like al-Hazmi, al-Midhar would also go on to take part in the hijacking of Flight 77. Both men were subsequently listed by

Anthony Shaffer as having been identified by Able Danger prior to 9/11.

Al-Bayoumi claimed that he had met the pair by chance, having struck up a conversation after overhearing them speaking Gulf Arabic in a restaurant. He organised accommodation for both men and paid for the first two months of their rent.[56] They resided at the San Diego home of Abdussattar Shaikh, a friend of al-Bayoumi and FBI informant.[57]

Though al-Bayoumi was subsequently released from custody in the UK and faced no charges in either Britain or the United States, eventually returning to Saudi Arabia, the FBI later concluded that he was a Saudi intelligence asset.[58] Whilst filming in Washington in 1999, al-Bayoumi was accompanied by two Saudi diplomats, Mutaeb al-Sudairy and Adel al-Sadhan, whom the FBI claimed were linked to al-Qaeda.[59] Al-Sudairy had previously resided in Missouri alongside Ziyad Khaleel, an al-Qaeda member who had delivered an advanced satellite phone to Osama bin Laden which was used to coordinate the US embassy bombings.[60] Both al-Sudairy and al-Sadhan were members of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, a highly influential Saudi government branch tasked with promoting Wahhabism worldwide.[61] Whilst residing in the US, al-Bayoumi received a monthly stipend worth $3,500 from the wife of Prince Bandar al-Sultan,[62] the long-time Saudi ambassador to the United States, and a close associate of George W. Bush.

Since its founding in 1932, Saudi Arabia has maintained close ties to the United States. In particular, the Gulf state has been a key strategic asset to Washington in terms of oil production and the hosting of US military bases. Despite seemingly damning evidence linking Riyadh to the September 11 attacks, Saudi Arabia was, unsurprisingly, not subject to a military response following 9/11. This would not be a fate shared by Afghanistan.

Following the collapse of Afghanistan's socialist government in 1992, a power vacuum emerged and the country fell into civil war. Though an interim government had been formed, its control over the mountainous country was tenuous, and rival factions soon began to emerge. One such group was the Taliban, established in the southern city of Kandahar in 1994.

Like al-Qaeda, the Taliban's founders were also veterans of the Mujahideen, though it differed from the former organisation in that it subscribed to the South Asian Deobandi school of Islamic fundamentalism, rather than the Gulf Wahhabism of al-Qaeda. The Taliban was also primarily composed of ethnic Pashtuns, whereas al-Qaeda was chiefly made up of Arabs. The Taliban soon proved itself to be the most dominant of the various Afghan factions, quickly seizing Kandahar and its surrounding regions, before capturing the eastern capital of Kabul in September 1996. Afghanistan's previous government fled to the northeast, and the country remained in civil war.

Though the Taliban was not the internationally recognised government of Afghanistan, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Pakistan, the United States initially pursued backchannel relations with the new regime. In particular, Washington sought cooperation in the development of the CentGas pipeline.[63]

Proposed by the US oil giant Unocal, CentGas would have begun in the gas fields of Turkmenistan, before passing through neighbouring Afghanistan into Pakistan. Plans were also in place to extend the pipeline to the Indian market.[64] With the Soviet Union no longer a factor, CentGas would have allowed the United States to extend its influence in the strategic Eurasia region.

The burgeoning relationship between the United States and the Taliban would not be a smooth one however.

Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the country was still beset by instability. Northern Afghanistan, which bordered both Turkmenistan and Pakistan, had become a stronghold of the previous government which had been overthrown by the Taliban, and fighting still took place between both sides. These were not conditions that were conducive to building a lucrative pipeline.

Tensions were exacerbated further by the presence of Osama bin Laden in the country. The al-Qaeda leader had established a base in Afghanistan several months prior to the Taliban takeover, having been expelled from Sudan following pressure from the United States. Though he had not yet reached the level of notoriety he would attain in the following years, Bin Laden organised the US embassy bombings while in Afghanistan, leading to the United States launching cruise missile strikes on al-Qaeda training camps in the country. Though the Taliban wasn't targeted in these attacks, Washington's patience with the group was beginning to wear thin.

At a summit meeting held in Berlin in July 2001,[65] US officials issued an ultimatum to Pakistani intermediaries. The Taliban had until October of that year to come to an agreement with the opposing Northern Alliance and stabilise Afghanistan so as to allow for the construction of the CentGas pipeline. Failure to comply would result in military action.[66]

Weeks later, 9/11 occurred. The United States now had a convenient pretext to launch a war that would have been roundly rejected by Congress in any other circumstances.

On October 7, 2001, a US-led coalition launched Operation Enduring Freedom, a full-scale invasion of Afghanistan. The Bush administration claimed that this was in response to the country's harbouring of Osama bin Laden. This was despite the fact that the Taliban had publicly offered to detain the al-Qaeda leader and hand him over to

the US for trial, provided that discussions were held first with the United States in order to establish Bin Laden's connection to 9/11. This offer was rejected by the US.[67]

The Taliban was quickly overwhelmed by coalition forces. In a matter of weeks, Kabul had been captured by the Northern Alliance with the assistance of US air strikes. By December, Taliban rule in Afghanistan had completely collapsed. Bin Laden escaped to Pakistan amidst the fighting, where he would be killed by US Special Forces a decade later. With the Taliban no longer in power, the US now sought to establish a new Afghan government.

At the end of 2001, a conference in the German city of Bonn saw Hamid Karzai, a former Mujahideen fundraiser, chosen as the new leader of Afghanistan. Karzai remained in the role for thirteen years, during which he would receive secret payments from the CIA worth millions.[68] On New Year's Eve 2001, George W. Bush announced that Zalmay Khalilzad would act as US special envoy to Afghanistan. Khalilzad, an Afghan-born US citizen, had worked closely with Zbigniew Brzezinski as an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Columbia University from 1979 to 1989.[69] The same timeframe as Operation Cyclone. During the same period, Khalilzad also had a position as a policy planner in the US State Department, where he argued for continued support for the Mujahideen.[70] In the 1990s, Khalilzad became a strategy director at the RAND Corporation think tank, where he penned numerous papers promoting a more expansive US foreign policy in the 21st century.[71] He ended the decade with a stint as a consultant for Cambridge Energy Research Associates, where he would be hired by Unocal as an adviser on the development of the CentGas pipeline.[72]

Far from concern over the previous human rights record of the Taliban, the new Afghan government was formed with the aim of advancing US interests in Eurasia. This was in line with a radical new US foreign policy that was implemented in the years following the 9/11 attacks. A foreign

policy that would also closely align with the strategic interests of Israel, a state that had a direct role in the events of September 11.

URBAN MOVING SYSTEMS

On the morning of September 11, as chaos unfolded in New York and the world was being irrevocably changed forever, Maria, a New Jersey housewife who lived facing the World Trade Center, noticed another concerning sight from her apartment window.

Three young men, kneeling on the roof of a delivery van in the car park, appeared to be in a celebratory mood, despite the scenes of death and destruction playing out in front of them. The men smiled, hugged and high-fived one another, and even took photos of the burning towers. Alarmed by this behaviour, Maria wrote down the registration number of the van and called the New Jersey State Police. The FBI was informed of this development, and an alert was issued.

That afternoon, the van was stopped by police in New Jersey and five men were arrested. To the puzzlement of the arresting officers it transpired that the men were Israeli, with the driver of the van declaring *'We are Israeli. We are not the problem. Your problems are our problems. The Palestinians are the problem'*.[73] Suspicions were further aroused by the items discovered on the men. Student IDs, suspected to be counterfeit, were found.[74] $4,700 in cash was found on one man and $1,022 was found on another.[75] The men were carrying their passports, including one who also had German documentation.[76] Plane tickets for immediate departure from the United States were discovered,[77] as well as a map of New York with certain locations marked out.[78] The van was handed over to the FBI for technical examination, and sniffer dogs detected traces of explosives in the vehicle.[79]

Later that night, as the world was beginning to absorb the horror that had just unfolded in the United States, multiple news reports began to break through that a number of men had been arrested after a truck laden with explosives was stopped on the George Washington Bridge.[80] This was not far from the Weehawken premises of Urban Moving Systems, the New Jersey moving company to which the van containing the five arrested Israelis was registered.

The following day, with the United States in a heightened state of alert, an Urban Moving Systems truck was stopped by police in Pennsylvania while travelling en route to the Flight 93 crash site. The vehicle had already been stopped in the same location on September 11 as part of the FBI alert. The two occupants of the vehicle, who were also Israeli, were arrested, and while in custody made a point of telling officers that they hadn't been in New York the previous day.[81] A gasoline receipt found in a search of the vehicle, however, seemingly contradicted this claim.[82] With suspicions beginning to mount, the FBI raided Urban Moving Systems on September 13.

Upon searching the premises, agents found little evidence to suggest the presence of a legitimate business and began to suspect that Urban Moving Systems was a fraudulent operation.[83] In particular, the inordinate amount of computer units seized drew suspicions owing to the company's relatively small size.[84] Dominik Suter, the Israeli owner of Urban Moving Systems, was questioned but not detained by FBI agents. When asked about the truck stopped in Pennsylvania, Suter revealed, perhaps inadvertently, that neither of its occupants had any deliveries scheduled for outside of New Jersey on September 11.[85]

The search of Urban Moving Systems garnered significant attention from local media. A September 15 report by Adam Lisberg of *The Record of New Jersey* contained a particularly damning revelation of the company.

An employee, who asked not to be named, revealed that the majority of his co-workers were Israelis, and on September 11, they had a nonchalant attitude towards the atrocities that had just unfolded. The worker was quoted as saying *'I was in tears. These guys were joking and that bothered me. These guys were like "Now America knows what we go through".*

A former employee subsequently contacted the FBI over these reports, and revealed that he had left Urban Moving Systems over the rabid anti-American sentiment that was present in the company. In particular, an Israeli co-worker had once remarked to him *'Give us twenty years and we'll take over your media and destroy your country'*.[86] Another former employee told agents that he wasn't surprised that Dominik Suter was now being viewed with suspicion as he had always spoken negatively of the United States.[87] This employee also revealed that Israeli co-workers would only speak Hebrew in his presence, and that Suter regularly held meetings with them without inviting any other non-Israeli employee.[88]

FBI agents returned to Urban Moving Systems on September 17 to further question Dominik Suter,[89] and found that the building had been abandoned. Suter was also nowhere to be found. He had put his New Jersey home up for sale after being questioned and had taken an immediate flight back to Israel.[90]

The five Israelis arrested on September 11 continued to be held in custody. They were Sivan Kurzberg, who made the initial *'We are Israeli'* declaration to the New Jersey police, his brother Paul, Yaron Shmuel, Oded Ellner, and Omer Marmari. Having initially been detained by the FBI's Newark division on suspicion of visa violations, the investigation into the men was quickly upgraded to an espionage case.

Suspecting that they may have had foreknowledge of the attacks, agents asked them to account for their whereabouts at the time of the first plane striking the World Trade Center.

Yaron Shmuel had initially told the New Jersey police *'We were on the west side highway during the incident'*.[91] The west side highway is located in New York. The pictures seized by the FBI showed that Shmuel and two of the other men were in the New Jersey car park at the time of the first tower being struck. Shmuel told FBI agents during the interview that he had been at work when he learned of the attacks.[92]

Another man who was present at the apartment complex also claimed to have been at work when the first tower was struck. The man, whose name was redacted in the FBI release, told agents that upon seeing the North Tower in flames, he himself, Shmuel, and a third Israeli had decided to drive to a nearby car park, which offered a view of both towers, in order to take photographs of the event *'for history'*.[93]

This in itself raises questions. How were the men aware that they were in the midst of a historical event after the first tower was struck, and not merely just a tragic flight accident? Moreover, if they had been at work as claimed when the North Tower was struck, did they travel to the car park knowing that the South Tower would soon suffer the same fate?

Another man, whose name was also redacted, told agents that he had arrived at work at 8 AM that morning when he had learned of the attacks, despite the first plane not striking the North Tower until 8:46AM.[94] Witnesses in the apartment complex, however, did place the Israelis' van in the car park at 8 AM, almost an hour before the attacks began.[95]

Owing to the inconsistencies of the men's accounts regarding their whereabouts at the time of the attacks on the World Trade Center, FBI agents decided to subject them to lie detector tests. Paul Kurzberg initially refused to take part, but relented after ten weeks. He subsequently failed the test. Kurzberg's legal team would later state that his reluctance to

take part was due to his previous work for Israeli intelligence in another unnamed country.[96]

As the investigation widened, the FBI's Newark division subsequently arrested four Israeli employees of another New Jersey moving company, Classic International Movers. This was based on a tip-off from the FBI's Miami office, who suspected that Classic International Movers had been used by one of the hijackers to move to Florida prior to 9/11.[97] This would not be the Sunshine State's only connection to the case. A Florida driving license had been discovered on one of the five Israelis arrested on September 11,[98] as well as a notepad containing the phone number of Classic International Movers.[99] The two Israelis detained in Pennsylvania on September 12 had also spent time in Miami upon their arrival to the United States.[100]

Three more Israelis would be arrested under suspicious circumstances on October 17. A Philadelphia pizzeria manager, having noticed old furniture dumped at the rear of his business, went to remonstrate with a nearby truck driver whom he believed was responsible. The driver flatly refused any wrongdoing, and quickly sped off. The pizzeria manager had been able to obtain the registration number of the vehicle, as well as its company name - Moving Systems Incorporated, a Florida-based moving company.

Having passed these details to the police, the truck was discovered parked a short distance away. Officers knocked on the window of the cab in order to make contact, and were greeted by Ron Katar, an Israeli national.[101] Katar was asked if he was the driver of the truck, and he replied that he wasn't. The driver of the truck, Moshe Elmakais, was returning to the vehicle at the same time. He was accompanied by Ayelet Reisler, who began walking in a different direction when she noticed the police officers and pretended she wasn't with Elmakais. All three were arrested.

Similar to the five Israelis arrested on September 11, suspicions were also aroused by the items found on the Pennsylvania suspects. Reisler had a German passport in her name, but medication labelled with a different name.[102] A camcorder with a VCR tape was discovered in the truck. The tape contained a number of zoomed-in shots of the Sears Tower in Chicago.[103] A media report also revealed that military grade explosives and 1,000 feet of detonating cord were found in the locker of a nearby bus station at the same time that the three Israelis were arrested.[104]

Within hours of the 9/11 attacks, the FDNY, NYPD, and FBI had each come to the conclusion that explosives had been placed in the World Trade Center beforehand, and that these devices had detonated upon the impact of the planes. The NYPD had specifically stated that they believed a van laden with explosives had been parked in the underground car park of the WTC, and the FBI stated that they believed a car or truck carrying explosives was present. As such, five men, three of whom had been seen celebrating the attacks, being arrested hours later in a van containing traces of explosives, cannot be regarded as anything less than damning. Even more so, Israelis being arrested in vans and trucks with traces of explosives nearby was now seemingly becoming a pattern. In May 2002, another two Israelis would be arrested in the Washington town of Oak Harbor, home to a US Naval base, whilst driving a truck that tested positive for the presence of the explosives RDX and TNT.[105]

Following the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, *Time* magazine featured a report, citing Israeli sources, which revealed that Israeli security officials had carried out a risk analysis of the World Trade Center in 1991 and came to the conclusion that the underground car park would be vulnerable to a car bomb.[106] This assessment was carried out on behalf of ZIM, a partially Israeli state-owned shipping firm which had an office located in the North Tower. ZIM did not comment publicly on the *Time* report, indicating

that the assessment was likely a covert Mossad operation carried out without the knowledge of the US government. ZIM maintained its presence in the World Trade Center until 2001, when it announced in April that year that it would be leaving the building to move to new premises in Virginia. The Israeli firm left the World Trade Center on September 4, 2001, a timing which can't be described as anything less than suspect.[107]

The FBI eventually came to the conclusion that the five Israelis arrested on September 11 had been conducting electronic surveillance activities for Mossad,[108] and that Urban Moving Systems served as a front for Israeli intelligence to monitor Islamist groups in the United States.[109] Two of the men's names had appeared on a joint FBI-CIA database of suspected intelligence operatives upon their arrest.[110] Following negotiations between Tel Aviv and Washington, all five would be released after 71 days in custody. This was ostensibly owed to the FBI's assertion that none of the men had foreknowledge of the attacks. A claim that was quickly cast into doubt.

The case of the five Israelis, dubbed the High Fivers by FBI agents, and the Dancing Israelis by 9/11 sceptics, had garnered significant media attention, and upon their return to Tel Aviv in November 2001, all five were interviewed by journalist and future Prime Minister Yair Lapid about their time in custody. When Lapid inquired about their reason for taking photographs on that fateful day, Oded Ellner, the Israeli found with $4,700 in cash on September 11, gave a reply that has gone down in infamy.

'The fact of the matter is, we are coming from a country that experiences terror daily. Our purpose was to document the event'.

Few people could have been in doubt that they were in the midst of a historical event upon seeing the second plane strike the South Tower. Had 9/11 occurred in the age of the

smartphone, social media would have been awash with images and videos of the devastation wrought upon New York that day. As such, a logical conclusion can be drawn that had someone in New York or New Jersey been in possession of a camera or video recorder at the time of the attacks, they may have indeed taken footage, perhaps to even assist the authorities in any investigation.

The first question that arises in the case of the five Israelis, however, is, why had they brought a camera for what was supposedly just another Tuesday of moving furniture around New Jersey? Furthermore, how were they aware that they were in the midst of a historical event upon seeing the first plane crashing into the World Trade Center, and not merely just a tragic flight accident? The FBI noted that the men were '*visibly happy*' in almost all of the photographs seized.[111] These included a photo of Sivan Kurzberg holding a lighter in the air with the Twin Towers smouldering in the background.[112] Why would a flight accident OR a terrorist attack elicit such a response?

That Ellner described this as their '*purpose*' rather than their intention is also telling. Had he described it as their intention, that would indicate that the opportunity had presented itself to the Israelis to take photos of what was quite clearly a major world event. The use of '*purpose*' however, indicates that they had been designated a very specific role beforehand. Were the two Israelis arrested in Pennsylvania on September 12, en route to the Flight 93 crash site, also acting in a similar capacity?

Suspicions were compounded further in February 2002 when the FBI distributed a list of terrorist suspects to European financial institutions in order to track money trails. Featuring alongside the names of Osama bin Laden and the 9/11 hijackers was none other than Urban Moving Systems boss Dominik Suter and his wife Ornit Levinson-Suter.[113] Serious doubts were now cast on claims that there was no Israeli foreknowledge of the attacks. Questions were also

raised about conflicts of interest amongst those tasked with investigating 9/11.

Two weeks prior to 9/11, NYPD Commissioner Bernard Kerik paid an official visit to Israel. Having been invited by Israeli security minister Uzi Landau, the purpose of this visit was to develop greater coordination between US and Israeli law enforcement in tackling the supply of narcotics into the United States by Israeli gangs.[114] In exchange for this cooperation, Kerik would share NYPD tactics with the Israeli police.[115] Far from just discussing policing strategies, however, Kerik also met with industrialist Eitan Wertheimer while on this visit.[116]

Wertheimer was the scion of a wealthy Israeli family that had amassed its fortune developing metal cutting tools, and owned a number of companies that had contracts with the US Department of Defense. Kerik had previously been introduced to Wertheimer by Brooklyn businessman Shimon Cohen, a marble and stone merchant and mutual friend.[117] Cohen and Kerik themselves had first met through New York real estate developer Nathan Berman. Berman had given Kerik an undeclared $28,000 loan in 1999 in order to purchase a Bronx apartment.[118]

In late 2001, Kerik sold this apartment for an asking price boosted by extensive renovations. Having moved to another luxury apartment in Manhattan, Kerik then received $236,000 in rent over two years from real estate developer and future US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff.[119] This was outlined in a 2007 *New York Times* article, which also revealed that Kerik had received a $250,000 interest-free loan from Eitan Wertheimer in 2003. Kerik and his wife had just purchased a house in New Jersey at the time.

On New Year's Eve 2001, Kerik's tenure as NYPD Commissioner came to an end. To mark the occasion he commissioned 19 blue and gold enamel badges marked *'Honorary*

Police Commissioner' to hand out to family and friends. Berman, Witkoff and Wertheimer were all recipients.[120]

Kerik's personal and financial ties to Wertheimer weren't his only connections to the highest levels of the Israeli establishment. During his August 2001 visit to Israel, the NYPD commissioner attended a state dinner with none other than Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.[121] All of which calls into question Kerik's impartiality in investigating any possible Israeli connections to the attack on the World Trade Center. Kerik would not be an isolated case in this regard.

One of the highest-level US officials known to have lobbied for the five Israelis' release was Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. This was outlined in an October 2001 article by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, which also revealed that two unidentified New York congressmen had also put pressure on authorities to release the five men.[122] When the five Israelis were eventually released, it had to be personally signed off by Attorney General John Ashcroft. Ashcroft remained in this role until 2005, when he set up a consultancy firm. One of its first clients was the Israeli government.[123] In later years, Bernard Kerik also became a vocal supporter of Israel on social media.

In 2004, Paul Kurzberg revealed in an interview with Britain's *Channel 4* that he had previously been a member of the Israeli special forces. In 2021, an article on the investigative website *The Grayzone* revealed that he had also served in a security detail for the Jewish Agency. This is a semi-government body that promotes Jewish immigration to Israel. Indeed, a diplomatic passport related to this work had been found on Kurzberg upon his arrest.[124] Moving furniture around the US East Coast seemed quite the career change for someone with such an extensive military background.

The case of the five Israelis arrested on September 11 raises many questions. Even more questions would be asked by the end of 2001 when it emerged that another Israeli spy

ring had been operating in the United States. One that used a different cover to moving companies.

ART STUDENTS

In December 2001, an exposé by *FOX News* journalist Carl Cameron revealed that up to 200 Israelis had been arrested in the United States that year on suspicion of espionage. These arrests had taken place both before and after the 9/11 attacks.[125] Many of these Israelis had posed as art students, and had sought access to sensitive government buildings through the sale of artwork. They had also attempted to sell paintings at the homes of government agents.[126]

The majority of those arrested had previously served in the Israeli military, and a number were still active members. This was not out of the ordinary as military service is compulsory in Israel, and it is a tradition amongst young Israelis to travel abroad upon its completion. What was notable in the case of the numerous Israelis arrested in the US, however, was how many of them had served in elite units.

In January 2001, Lior Baram, an Israeli national, visited the Houston office of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and offered to sell artwork. This had been the third such visit to the building in as many months by Israelis attempting to sell art,[127] and suspicions were aroused. Agents questioned Baram, and he revealed that he had served two years as a military intelligence officer in Israel.[128] He also told agents that he had studied art at Jerusalem's Bezalel University, but was unable to spell Bezalel when asked.[129]

On March 26, 2001, nine Israelis were arrested at an apartment complex in Irving, Texas. These included Eran Livni, Michal Gal and Aran Ofek.[130] All three had attempted to sell artwork at the Dallas office of the DEA. Ofek told federal agents that he was the son of a retired two-star Israeli

general.[131] Also arrested in this operation was Eran Moshe, a former member of the Israeli special forces.[132]

Three more Israelis were questioned at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport the following day. One was Dilka Borenstein, a former military intelligence officer,[133] and another was Ofir Navon, a demolition expert.[134] The three were released, but were placed under covert surveillance by agents, who then observed them being picked up by Michael Calmanovic.

Calmanovic was subsequently identified by one of the Israelis in custody as the liaison for an organisation that recruited students to travel to the United States to sell artwork door-to-door.[135] Further investigations found that Calmanovic had rented five apartments at another complex in Irving, where he had played host to 25 Israelis. All had hastily left this building within days of their compatriots being arrested.[136] Calmanovic was tracked down shortly afterwards and arrested at another Irving apartment complex. Alongside him was Itay Simon, who had been identified by one of the Israelis in custody as a direct contact to the organisation that was facilitating the sale of artwork in the United States.[137] Calmanovic told agents that he had worked in electronic intercept for the Israeli military,[138] and Simon said that he had taken part in *'classified work for Israeli national security'*.[139] Simon refused to answer any further questions regarding his military service. Both were held on a $50,000 bond which was subsequently posted by an unidentified individual.[140]

In early May 2001, two more Israelis, Marina Glikman and Tomer Ben Dor, were questioned upon their arrival at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. Glikman was a former military intelligence officer[141] and Ben Dor had served in a unit responsible for Israel's Patriot missile defence system.[142] A printout of a computer file found in his luggage contained a reference to *'DEA groups'*.[143] Agents also questioned two Israelis at the airport who had arrived to

greet Glikman and Ben Dor. They were Hillel Dor and Zeev Miller, a former explosives ordnance engineer for the Israeli army.[144]

Texas was not the only US state where highly-trained former Israeli military personnel were now seemingly pursuing new careers selling artwork.

In Florida, on May 2, 2001, the driver of a vehicle in the car park of the DEA's Orlando office was spotted taking photographs of the building. Agents attempted to question the driver over this behaviour, but the car sped off before they could reach it. The following day, an Israeli, Peer Segalovitz, entered the building and attempted to sell artwork. He was immediately arrested.[145]

Segalovitz told agents that he was a former lieutenant in the Israeli special forces and had commanded a unit of 80 men.[146] This unit specialised in demolition and was stationed in the Golan Heights. It had also taken part in two operations in Lebanon involving the assassination of Hezbollah members.[147] Segalovitz acknowledged that he was an explosives expert and could blow up *'buildings, bridges, cars and anything else he needed to'*.[148] He also admitted that he was part of a group of 30 Israelis who were selling artwork in Florida. Segalovitz didn't state what their purpose was, but did admit that they weren't there for legitimate reasons.[149]

During the interview, Segalovitz mentioned a friend of his and fellow Israeli, Akyuz Sagiv. Agents scoured the local area and found Sagiv selling art a short distance from the Orlando office. Like Segalovitz, Sagiv was also an explosives expert,[150] and had been the personal bodyguard to the highest ranking general in the Israeli army.[151]

Two months beforehand, a young Israeli woman had visited the Tampa office of the DEA and offered to sell artwork. With agents already on alert over this behaviour, the woman was brought to an interview room where she identified herself as Bella Pollcson,[152] and pointed out that one of

the paintings was signed by that name. Pollcson's story soon began to change, however, and she said that the paintings weren't for sale. They were instead part of an upcoming art exhibition in Sarasota. Pollcson was unable to say when or where exactly in Sarasota that this exhibition would take place, but requested the agents' business cards so she could mail them the details. Agents' suspicions were aroused by this behaviour, and they began to question Pollcson more closely about who she was working with.

Pollcson revealed that she had been dropped off at the building by her '*team leader*' who was driving a red van. Also present were a number of other male and female art students. Agents searched the local area and found two women who had matched the descriptions given by Pollcson. While talking to these women, the red van mentioned by Pollcson pulled up. It contained six Israeli occupants. All present were escorted to the DEA office for questioning, where it subsequently emerged that Pollcson had lied about her identity and she was in fact, Inbal Vakshi.[153]

The driver of the red van and team leader was identified as Hanan Serfaty.[154] Serfaty told agents that he had arrived in the United States the previous year when he was 23 years old. He said that he served in the Israeli military from the age of 18 to 21. However, when asked what he worked as from the age of 21 to 24, Serfaty was not as forthcoming, and refused to answer agents' questions. When asked about his sale of artwork, Serfaty stated that he purchased paintings for $8 to $15 apiece from an Englishman called Tom, and then sold them on at prices ranging from $50 to $80. Bank slips found on Serfaty showed that he had deposited more than $100,000 into an account in the previous three months, and had withdrawn $86,000 in the same period.[155] Unfeasible amounts of money for a supposed line of work selling relatively cheap paintings. Agents also took note of Serfaty's excellent command of the English language.[156]

Hanan Serfaty was certainly a notable individual, but what was perhaps most notable about him was where he resided in Florida. Serfaty had an apartment at Hollywood's Sheridan Street,[157] the same postal address as Mohamed Atta,[158] and a short distance away from the Jackson Street residence that Atta shared with Marwan al-Shehhi,[159] who would crash Flight 175 into the South Tower six months later. Both Atta and al-Shehhi had attended flight schools in Florida[160] alongside Ziad Jarrah, who was at the helm of Flight 93 when it crashed into a Shanksville field. Jarrah also had an address at Hollywood's Harding Street,[161] as well as a number of other locations in Florida.[162]

Indeed, Florida would unwittingly play host to ALL of the hijackers of Flights 11, 175 and 93 prior to the attacks. Florida was also the state with the most reports of suspicious activity involving supposed Israeli art students. Lior Baram, the former intelligence officer who had tried to sell art at the Houston DEA office, had a Florida driving license in his possession upon his arrest.[163] Eli Cohen[164] and Oshirt Zaguri,[165] who had been arrested alongside Hanan Serfaty, also had addresses in Hollywood, where three of the lead hijackers and a number of others were based. It is hard to dismiss this as a coincidence, and even more so when the main location of the Flight 77 hijackers is taken into account.

In May 2001, Hani Hanjour and Nawaf al-Hazmi established a base in Paterson, New Jersey.[166] Already a hotbed of Israeli intelligence activity related to Urban Moving Systems, New Jersey also had reports of suspicious activity related to supposed art students. In April 2001, Israeli Meirav Balhams was questioned at a Virginia shopping mall after an attempt was made to sell artwork at the home of a DEA agent.[167] Balhams, who was identified as being a team leader in the Israeli operation, had an address at Paterson Plank Road.[168] This was a short distance from where Hanjour and al-Hazmi took up residence a month later. They were joined by al-Hazmi's brother Salem and Majed Moqed.[169] Khalid al-Mid-

har would follow in July,[170] completing the cell that would ultimately crash Flight 77 into the Pentagon.

With the FBI concluding that Urban Moving Systems was an Israeli intelligence operation to monitor Islamist groups, it is difficult to believe that the Flight 77 hijackers were not on the radar of the Mossad operatives posing as removals men and art students. Likewise, it is unfathomable that the Israeli agents based in Florida were unaware of the numerous al-Qaeda members on their doorstep. In Texas, Michael Calmanovic resided minutes away from Ahmed Khalafa, an FBI terror suspect.[171] In Arizona, where Hani Hanjour had taken flight lessons, there were also arrests as part of the Israeli espionage investigation.[172] The art student operation stretched from the East Coast to West, and at no point did any future hijacker reside in a location that had no traces of its activity.[173] There is also evidence that the hijackers were being tracked by Mossad outside of the US.

In March 2002, the French outlet *Le Monde* revealed that two of the detained Israelis had travelled directly from Hamburg to Miami to attempt to sell artwork at the home of an FBI agent. They had then flown to Chicago to again try to sell artwork at the home of a Department of Justice employee, before taking a flight to Toronto. Both sales attempts and all three flights had taken place on the same day. Prior to entering the US, Hamburg was also the location where Mohamed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah had first met while studying in university.[174] The *Le Monde* article also revealed that six of the arrested Israelis had cellular phones that were purchased by a former Israeli vice consul.[175]

Of the 200 Israelis who had been arrested in the US throughout 2001, 60 were detained after the September 11 attacks. A number of these detainees were employees of the Israeli telecommunications firm Amdocs.[176] Michal Gal, who had been arrested in Texas, also had his $10,000 bail bond posted by Ophir Baer, a relative and Amdocs employee.[177] Amdocs had been contracted with processing the telecom-

munications data of almost every phone user in the United States. It had also been viewed with suspicion by US authorities in the years prior to 9/11.

In 1997, US law enforcement was investigating the activities of an Israeli transnational crime organisation responsible for the importation of narcotics into the United States. Vast amounts of cocaine and ecstasy were being trafficked into Florida, New York and Los Angeles in particular. Following the arrest of a number of Israeli suspects in Los Angeles, it emerged that the organisation had access to the telecommunications data of law enforcement officials and was using this information to stay ahead of investigations.[178] The LAPD, DEA, FBI and Secret Service had all been compromised by this leak.[179] The CIA launched an investigation and suspicions began to fall on Amdocs.[180] In 1999, the NSA issued an internal memo that revealed information being processed by Amdocs was ending up in Israeli government hands.[181]

Another Israeli firm included in the 9/11 investigation was Comverse InfoSys. This company provided the technology used by US law enforcement to wiretap criminal and terrorist suspects. Counterterrorism officials, who had been monitoring suspects in the 9/11 attacks, noticed that they would alter their telecommunications processes every time the decision had been made to place them under wiretap surveillance.[182] A similar pattern had previously been observed amongst Israeli organised crime suspects who had been subject to telephone monitoring.[183] This raises the stark possibility that Israeli intelligence, having infiltrated al-Qaeda, had been passing information onto the group, impeding US investigations and effectively facilitating the September 11 attacks.

In March 2001, the Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive issued a public news bulletin. Its first point focused on the supposed art students who had been frequenting government buildings since the beginning of

the year. Revealingly, the bulletin mentioned that the group *'may have ties to a Middle Eastern Islamic fundamentalist group'*.[184] Of the five Israelis arrested on September 11, one was found with a notepad containing the phone number of *'an individual in South America with authentic ties to Islamic militants in the middle east'*.[185] The four Israeli employees of Classic International Movers who had been arrested on suspicion of transporting one of the hijackers had all spent time in South America prior to entering the United States.[186]

Alongside Amdocs and Comverse InfoSys, Odigo, an Israeli instant messaging service, also formed part of the investigation following the 9/11 attacks. Two hours prior to the first plane striking the North Tower, two employees at the firm's Israeli headquarters received texts on the service threatening that attacks were imminent.[187] Odigo's US office was located a short distance away from the World Trade Center.[188] The employees did not notify the company's management until after the attacks had begun. Israeli authorities passed this information on to the US and the FBI began an investigation. No information is publicly available on what the outcome was. In 2002, Odigo was purchased by Comverse InfoSys.[189]

The General Accounting Office, which is responsible for the auditing of US government departments, had previously conducted an investigation into Israeli espionage against the United States. It revealed that an unnamed US intelligence agency had determined that Israel conducted the *'most aggressive espionage operation against the U.S. of any U.S. ally'*.[190] The Defense Intelligence Agency carried out a similar investigation. It found that Israel had a *'voracious appetite for information'* and was *'motivated by strong survival instincts'*.[191] As a result, *'it aggressively collects military and industrial technology and the U.S. is a high priority target'*.[192] Indeed, four Israelis posing as art students had been arrested in May 2001 after an alert had been issued over suspected intelligence gathering at Oklahoma's Tinker Air Force

Base.[193] This activity was not something that had begun in the late 90s or at the dawn of the 21st century.

In 1987, Jonathan Pollard, a civilian intelligence analyst who worked for the US Navy, was sentenced to life in prison for passing on extensive classified information to Israel. He had been recruited by Aviem Sella, an Israeli Air Force colonel who had taken leave to study for a master's degree in computer science at New York University.[194] Sella fled the United States upon Pollard's arrest in 1985, and Israel refused to extradite him.[195]

The case caused a strain in US-Israeli relations and led to Tel Aviv issuing a public apology to Washington.[196] Having been in custody since the time of his arrest, Pollard would ultimately serve thirty years in a US prison before being released in 2015. Upon the expiration of Pollard's parole conditions in 2020, he relocated to Israel, where he had been granted citizenship. In 2021, Aviem Sella received a presidential pardon on the last day of Donald Trump's first term in office.

The Israeli spy ring in the early 2000s took place on a far larger scale than the Jonathan Pollard case. In fact, it was the largest documented spy ring in US history. Unlike Jonathan Pollard, however, all those known to have been arrested were eventually released and deported on immigration grounds. This was despite the fact that there was a confirmed connection between the arrested Israelis and the 9/11 attacks.

In the December 2001 *FOX* report, Carl Cameron revealed that a highly placed investigator had told him there were *'tie-ins'* between the Israeli spy ring and 9/11. When Cameron inquired further, the source refused to divulge any more information, telling Cameron *'evidence linking these Israelis to 9/11 is classified. I cannot tell you about the evidence that has been gathered. It is classified information'*. That the source said evidence linking Israel to 9/11 was classified, rather than saying no such evidence existed in the first place,

speaks for itself. When *FOX News* host Brit Hume inquired about Israeli foreknowledge of the attacks, Cameron told him that when investigators put all the available evidence together, the question they were left with was *'how could they NOT have known?'*.

Of course, it must be pointed out that Mossad representatives did, in fact, travel to Washington in late August 2001 and warn US officials that an attack was imminent. This was reported by the British newspaper *The Times*[197] and the German outlet *Die Zeit*,[198] then later denied by both the CIA[199] and Israeli officials.[200]

A list of suspects was handed over, including at least four of the hijackers. This would effectively confirm that the hijackers were being monitored by Israeli intelligence while in the United States. Despite this extensive surveillance, no specific details were given to US officials regarding the time or location of the attack, and there was even an indication given that it may have been planned to take place outside the United States. The Israeli officials did, however, emphasise that they believed the Iraqi government was involved.[201] Despite no tangible evidence ever being produced to link Saddam Hussein to the September 11 attacks, a US led invasion of Iraq followed two years later. This would align with an Israeli geostrategic objective that had been planned for decades.

THE YINON PLAN

In 1982, Oded Yinon, a senior official at the Israeli Foreign Ministry, penned a paper entitled *A Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties*. More commonly known as the Yinon Plan, the document was published by the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) in the Hebrew journal KIVUNIM. In it, Yinon prioritised the dissolution of Iraq along ethnic and religious lines as a key strategic goal for Israel.

Iraq, which subscribed to the pan-Arab Ba'athist ideology, had begun to emerge as Israel's main regional rival following the Camp David Accords and the normalisation of ties between Egypt and Israel. In 1981, the Israeli Air Force had bombed the under-construction Osirak reactor in eastern Iraq, after suspecting it would be used to develop nuclear weapons.[202]

In early August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait in a dispute over oil production[203] and loan repayments related to the Iran-Iraq War.[204] Baghdad's forces quickly overwhelmed its smaller Gulf neighbour, and by the end of the month, the entirety of Kuwait had been annexed by Iraq. That October, a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl, identified only as Nayirah, testified before a US congressional hearing that while working as a volunteer nurse, she had witnessed Iraqi troops removing premature babies from incubators and leaving them to die on a hospital floor. This testimony was instrumental in pushing towards a US military intervention in Kuwait. In January 1991, following the expiration of a UN-imposed deadline, a US-led coalition launched an aerial bombing campaign in order to drive Iraqi forces out of the country.

Iraq struggled to counter the superior air power of Operation Desert Storm. As a result, Baghdad launched dozens of Scud missiles towards Israel. This was done in the hope that an Israeli response would galvanise Arabs across the region and undermine Gulf support for the US intervention. Israel would ultimately not respond to these strikes, however, following pressure from the United States.[205] Iraq was defeated by the end of February 1991, though coalition forces still continued to bomb Iraqi troops as they retreated from Kuwait. This led to hundreds of deaths in an incident known as the Highway of Death.[206]

In the weeks following the end of the Gulf War, an *ABC News* report revealed that Nayirah's account of newborn infants being left to die on a hospital floor was a fabrication.[207] Nayirah was, in fact, the daughter of Saud Nasser al-Saud al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States and a member of Kuwait's ruling al-Sabah dynasty. His daughter's appearance before a US congressional hearing had been organised between a Kuwaiti government-funded group called Citizens for a Free Kuwait and the public relations firm Hill & Knowlton.[208] The United States had gone to war on a falsehood.

Rather than pursue a radical reappraisal of its foreign policy following this revelation however, the United States continued to maintain a belligerent stance towards Iraq. In April 1991, a no-fly zone was imposed on the north of the country, ostensibly in the protection of Kurdish minorities. The following year, a similar no-fly zone was put in place over southern Iraq, this time in order to protect Shia Muslims. Though seemingly carried out under the pretext of humanitarian interventions, both no-fly zones aligned with the objectives of the Yinon Plan.

The 1982 document outlined how, in order to Balkanise Iraq, the country had to be divided into at least three sections. A separatist Kurdish state in the north of the country, centred around the city of Mosul, a Sunni state in central

Iraq tied to the capital Baghdad, and a Shia region in southern Iraq based on the city of Basra.[209] Such an arrangement would undermine Ba'athist Iraq's pan-Arabism, which sought the establishment of a unified Arab state. Extensive sanctions were also placed on Iraq, leading to widespread starvation in the country.[210]

In 1997, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) think tank was established in Washington, D.C. by leading neoconservatives William Kristol and Robert Kagan. The PNAC envisaged the United States taking on a leading role in international affairs in a post-Cold War world where the US had emerged as the sole world superpower. This would be achieved through an expansive foreign policy based on military dominance.

Of the twenty five signatories of the PNAC's founding statement of principles, eight would go on to serve in the future US administration of George W. Bush. These were Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Special Assistant to the President Elliot Abrams, State Department counselor Eliot Cohen, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, Chief of Staff to the Vice President and National Security Advisor Scooter Libby, and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Peter Rodman. Other signatories included George Bush's brother Jeb Bush, and future special envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad.

Though ostensibly an organisation established to promote US interests, the PNAC's aims were also closely aligned with Israel's geostrategic ambitions. The PNAC was vehemently in favour of regime change in Iraq. In January 1998, the organisation wrote a letter to the Clinton administration calling for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power.[211] Several days later, both Kagan and Kristol co-authored an op-ed for *The New York Times* entitled *Bombing Iraq Isn't Enough*. It called for full-scale regime change in Iraq rather than

limited military strikes. That October, Clinton signed the Iraqi Liberation Act into law, which ratified US support for the end of Ba'athist rule in Iraq. In December 1998, the US and Britain launched Operation Desert Fox. This was a three-day bombing campaign intended to cripple Iraq's military infrastructure, but it stopped short of attempting to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

As the new millennium dawned, the PNAC produced its most influential document. *Rebuilding America's Defenses* was published in September 2000. In it, the PNAC advocated radical defence reforms that would enable the US to fight multiple theatre wars simultaneously. This, the PNAC argued, would extend the United States' status as the sole world superpower. The document concluded that *'the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalysing event – like a new Pearl Harbor'*.[212] One year later, such an event would conveniently occur in New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Within hours of the 9/11 attacks, Robert Kagan had penned an op-ed for *The Washington Post* entitled *We Must Fight This War*, comparing the day's events to the Japanese attack on Hawaii in 1941. On September 20th, the Project for the New American Century wrote a letter to the Bush administration, once again lobbying for regime change in Iraq, regardless of any evidence being produced to link Saddam Hussein to the attacks.[213] The PNAC would not be alone in these calls.

In August 2002, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called Iraq *'the greatest danger facing Israel'* at a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.[214] The Israeli government subsequently conveyed a message to the United States, urging it to not delay in any military action against Iraq.[215] On September 12, 2002, one year and one day after the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush gave a speech at the UN headquarters in New York, promoting regime

change in Iraq. The same day, Benjamin Netanyahu appeared before a US congressional panel in Washington, D.C., where he stringently lobbied for Saddam Hussein's removal from power.

Though this appearance was supposedly in a private capacity, Netanyahu was still a member of the ruling Likud party, and would become the Israeli foreign minister that November. During Netanyahu's appeal for Iraqi regime change, he infamously told the panel *'If you take out Saddam, Saddam's regime, I guarantee you, that it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region'*.

On March 20, 2003, a US-led coalition launched Operation Iraqi Freedom, a full-scale invasion of Iraq. Like the Taliban in Afghanistan, Iraq's military was also quickly overwhelmed by coalition forces, and by early April, Baghdad had fallen. On May 1, George W. Bush gave his infamous 'Mission Accomplished' speech aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln*. The same month, a US-administered provisional authority was established in Iraq. Its first executive order was to permanently ban all members of the Ba'ath Party from working in the public sector.[216]

Saddam Hussein escaped amidst the initial invasion, but was captured in the eastern town of ad-Dawr that December. He was executed following a trial just over three years later. In the subsequent power vacuum that had emerged following the invasion, Iraq plunged into sectarian bloodshed between Sunni and Shia factions.[217] A key geostrategic aim of the Yinon Plan had been realised. Iraq was not the only country planned to meet such a fate following the 9/11 attacks.

In 2007, media outlet *Democracy Now!* interviewed retired US general Wesley Clark. Clark had a distinguished military career, culminating in him serving as Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces in Europe from 1997 until his retirement in 2000. In 2004, he unsuccessfully

challenged for the Democrat nomination in that year's presidential election.

At the time of the interview, Clark had become a vocal opponent against any potential conflict with Iran. When host Amy Goodman asked if he had seen any parallels to the build-up to the Iraq War, Clark recounted how, in the days following 9/11, he had paid a visit to the Pentagon in order to meet with Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and members of the Joint Staff previously under his command. Whilst there, an unidentified general informed Clark that the decision had been made for the US to go to war with Iraq, despite there being no evidence linking Saddam Hussein to the attacks.

In a follow-up visit to the same official a few weeks later, at which stage the US had already begun bombing Afghanistan, Clark inquired if the plan to attack Iraq was still in place. The general produced a memo issued by Rumsfeld which outlined how the US was to '*take out seven countries in five years*'. The first target was Iraq, followed by Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia and Sudan, before '*finishing it off with Iran*'. Like Iraq, the Yinon Plan also had an influential role in the planning of this strategy.

Though the destruction of Iraq was the primary goal of the 1982 document, the dissolution of Syria along similar sectarian and ethnic lines was also outlined as a key strategic aim for Israel. Alongside Egypt and Jordan, Syria had been one of the first Arab states to declare war on Israel upon its creation in May 1948. Like Iraq, Syria was also under Ba'athist rule, and had been part of a unified Arab state alongside Egypt from 1958 until 1961. As a result, Damascus had long been in Tel Aviv's crosshairs.

In 1996, when Benjamin Netanyahu first became Israeli Prime Minister, the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies (IASPS), a US-Israeli think tank, tasked its Washington, D.C. office with identifying any security challenges that the new Israeli administration may face.

The Study Group on a New Israeli Strategy Towards 2000 was headed up by Richard Perle, a signatory of both the PNAC's 1998 letter to Bill Clinton calling for Iraqi regime change and the 2001 letter echoing the same calls to George W. Bush in the wake of 9/11. Perle would go on to serve as chairman of the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee during the Bush administration.

Joining Perle in the study group was Douglas Feith, who would go on to serve as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. While in this role, both Feith and Paul Wolfowitz had been instrumental in the decision to go to war with Iraq by producing manipulated intelligence findings that fraudulently suggested links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda.[218]

Another member of the IASPS study group who would go on to serve an influential role in the Bush administration was David Wurmser, who was selected as Middle East Adviser to Vice President Dick Cheney. In December 1996, the group produced its findings in a study entitled *A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm*.

The Clean Break document favoured an Israeli strike on the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and had that proved '*insufficient*', a strike on Syria itself. Following the collapse of Iraq into sectarian bloodshed, Israel would choose the latter option.

On September 6, 2007, the Israeli Air Force launched Operation Outside the Box, an air strike against a suspected nuclear reactor in the Deir ez-Zor region of eastern Syria. Israeli jets had flown through Turkish airspace to reach their target.[219] This was in line with the Clean Break document, which suggested cooperation with Turkey and Jordan in order to '*roll back*' Syria in the region.

In 2009, US ally Qatar proposed the construction of a pipeline from the Persian Gulf's lucrative North Dome gas field through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and then Tur-

key.[220] This would have ended the European market's reliance on Russian energy. Syria, a close ally of Russia since the Soviet era, refused to allow the pipeline to pass through its territory.[221]

The government of Bashar al-Assad proposed the construction of an 'Islamic pipeline' instead. This would begin in the Iran-controlled South Pars gas field - adjacent to the North Dome - before passing through Iraq, Syria and then the ports of Lebanon.[222] This would have resulted in Iran being the primary supplier to European markets, and undermined the regional influence of the US and its Gulf allies. As a result, plans were immediately put in place to remove Assad from power.[223]

In early 2011, amidst demonstrations that had begun in Syria as part of the wider Arab Spring, the CIA began covertly arming Wahhabi militants in order to overthrow Assad's secular rule.[224] Joining the United States in this endeavour were the intelligence agencies of a number of allied countries, including Qatar,[225] Saudi Arabia[226] and Israel.[227]

By 2012, the violence in Syria had escalated into a proxy war against the Assad government. That July, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton revealed in an email to her deputy Jake Sullivan that Israeli intelligence hoped that the collapse of Assad's rule would result in an Iraq-style civil war in Syria between Sunnis and Shias.[228] Such an outcome would align with the Yinon Plan, which envisaged a similar Balkanisation of Syria to Iraq.

In 2013, Syria's ally Iran intervened in the conflict at the request of Damascus. Two years later, Russia launched an air campaign in the country, again at the request of the Syrian government.

Though both interventions were instrumental in shoring up Assad's rule, a November 2024 lightning offensive by opposition group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) - aided by Israeli air strikes[229] - resulted in the capture of vast swathes

of the country. On December 8, 2024, Bashar al-Assad left Damascus alongside his family on a chartered flight to Moscow. Within hours, Israel had launched a ground invasion of southern Syria.

Similar to the Yinon Plan's Iraq strategy, the 1982 document also planned for the Balkanisation of Syria along ethnic and religious lines. This would be achieved by the establishment of a Shia Alawite region along Syria's Mediterranean coast, a Sunni state in the northwest Aleppo region, another Sunni state based in Damascus, and a separatist Druze state in southern Syria.[230] Following the collapse of Assad's rule, such an arrangement has effectively been put in place.

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, followers of medieval Sunni scholar Ibn Taymiyyah,[231] established a base in the capital Damascus following the overthrow of the previous government. In March 2025, HTS launched pogroms against Syria's coastal Alawite communities. This resulted in 1,400 deaths[232] and the same sectarian division in Syria as seen in post-invasion Iraq.

In 2016, Turkey invaded northern Syria, fearing that a Kurdish state would be established on its southern border. Like Israel, Turkey had also provided arms, funding, and training to Syrian opposition groups.[233] This aligned with the Clean Break document which suggested Israeli-Turkish cooperation to counter Syrian influence. The presence of Turkish forces in the northern region, alongside proxy groups known collectively as the Syrian National Army,[234] also align with the Yinon Plan's aim of two separate Sunni states in Syria.

In southern Syria, calls for Druze separatism have intensified since the fall of Assad.[235] A Druze state would geographically align with the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and the wider region of southern Syria that has been occupied by Israel since December 2024. Tel Aviv claimed that

this was in order to establish a buffer zone against Syria's new Islamist government, despite the fact that Damascus's new rulers had effectively acted in Israel's interests during the previous decade. The ethnic and religious division of Syria, in line with the Yinon Plan, has resulted in the Arab Republic no longer posing a threat to Israeli regional hegemony.

In 2006, Israel launched a 34-day bombing campaign in Lebanon. Though this was supposedly in response to the abduction of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah, an article by Seymour Hersh in *The New Yorker* revealed that Israel had devised a plan to attack the militant group prior to its capture of the Israeli troops, and this had been approved by the Bush administration.[236] In 2007, the United States began an aerial campaign against Islamist groups in Somalia. This increased US influence in the strategic Horn of Africa region, which aligned with the PNAC's aims of post-Cold War expansionism. In February 2011, the CIA fomented an armed insurgency[237] against the rule of Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, who had previously endorsed pan-Arabism[238] and supported Palestinian militant groups.[239] The US imposed a no-fly zone over Libya the following month and by October that year, Gaddafi had been lynched on a Libyan street. Libya fell into Iraq-style chaos and bloodshed as a result. In 2020, Sudan announced it would normalise ties with Israel as part of a deal brokered by the Trump administration. The Northeast African country was subsequently removed from the US State Sponsors of Terrorism list. Following the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's rule in Syria, only one country remained of the seven listed by Wesley Clark as being marked for regime change following 9/11.

In 1979, the Islamic Revolution in Iran saw Shah Reza Pahlavi being overthrown and replaced with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Pahlavi had fostered close ties to the West through the extensive privatisation of Iran's vast oil reserves. Khomeini however, adopted a markedly anti-

Western stance. Iran's new ruler held power for ten years before passing away in 1989. He was replaced by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who held similar hardline views. Following the turn of the century and the collapse of Iraq into sectarian bloodshed, the Islamic Republic began to emerge as the new regional threat to Israel.

Amidst the power vacuum that had emerged in Iraq following the US invasion, Iran began to forge ties with Shia militant groups in the country. Operating under the banner of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), these groups were instrumental in the 2017 recapture of the vast swathes of Iraqi territory that had fallen under Islamic State (IS) control. In 2020, PMU leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis was killed in a US drone strike on Baghdad International Airport. Alongside him was Qasem Soleimani, commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' elite Quds Force unit. In response to the death of Soleimani, Iran fired ballistic missiles at the US Ain al-Asad airbase in western Iraq several days later. Though this was an escalatory move, the exchange between the US and Iran stopped just short of a full-scale military confrontation.

In Syria, Tehran also extended its influence amidst the Western and Israeli-backed proxy war on the Arab Republic. In June 2013, Iran launched a military intervention in the country at the request of the Syrian government, with both countries having a longstanding mutual defence agreement.[240] Iran provided military advisers and combat troops to Syria during the conflict. Syria was of key strategic importance to Iran as it was a crucial supply route to Hezbollah in neighbouring Lebanon. Following the collapse of Assad's rule and the subsequent isolation of Iran, Israel repeated a tactic it had used in the past.

On June 13, 2025, Israel launched air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities and military infrastructure. Iran responded by firing ballistic missiles at Israel, and a war began between both sides. After nine days of exchanges, the

US intervened militarily on behalf of Israel. Operation Midnight Hammers saw the US Air Force use advanced 'bunker buster' bombs to strike Iran's underground Fordow uranium enrichment facility. Israeli technology had been incapable of reaching the site. Similar facilities at Isfahan and Natanz were also struck by the United States. Iran responded by bombing the al-Udeid US airbase in Qatar 24 hours later. No casualties occurred as Tehran had given Washington an advance warning of the attack. On June 25, a tentative ceasefire was declared between both sides.

Despite this cessation of hostilities, a subsequent article in *Foreign Policy* revealed that Israel has planned to restart the conflict by December 2025.[241] This would be done with the intention of toppling the Iranian government, rather than just crippling its nuclear and military infrastructure. To achieve this would depend on even greater US involvement. Should that occur, it would align with the radical US foreign policy put in place following the 9/11 attacks. A foreign policy that has been of significant benefit to Israel.

A HISTORY OF FALSE FLAGS

When all available information on 9/11 is examined objectively, evidence of Israeli involvement becomes insurmountable. Saudi Arabia is not blameless. Riyadh gave material assistance to at least two of the hijackers upon their entry to the United States. A Saudi government employee recorded himself effectively carrying out a reconnaissance mission in Washington, D.C. two years beforehand. Had the hijackers not been shielded from wiretap surveillance by Israeli intelligence, however, the likelihood emerges that the attacks would never have occurred in the first place.

Israeli intelligence gave logistical support to the hijackers by moving them throughout the United States in the lead-up to the attacks. Within hours of the collapse of the World Trade Center, both the NYPD and the FBI had come to the conclusion that vehicles carrying explosives had been placed in the WTC's underground car park. Five Israelis, three of whom had been seen celebrating the attack, were arrested in a van containing traces of explosives shortly afterwards. An FBI investigation determined that they were Israeli intelligence operatives. Had a group of Iraqis, Syrians, or Iranians been arrested in similar circumstances, they would likely be held in Guantanamo Bay or ADX Florence to this day.

Hundreds of Israelis were arrested throughout the United States in 2001 as part of an espionage investigation. These arrests took place both before and after the September 11 attacks. Many of those detained had expertise in military intelligence, signals intercept and explosives handling. The

most recorded activity related to the Israeli spy ring took place in Florida, where a number of the hijackers had set up base prior to the attacks. New Jersey, where the remaining hijackers were located, was also a hotbed of Israeli intelligence activity. All hijackers resided in direct proximity to Israeli cells. Had hundreds of highly-trained former Iranian military personnel been arrested in identical circumstances, US missiles would have been fired at Tehran within weeks of the 9/11 attacks.

A warning was passed on to the United States by Israeli intelligence in late August 2001 that an attack was imminent. However, crucial details were lacking. The Israelis also fraudulently claimed that there was Iraqi involvement. The toppling of Saddam Hussein's rule had been a long-term strategic goal for Israel, and 9/11 served as a pretext for the US to go to war.

Complicity in the September 11 attacks was also present at the highest levels of the Bush administration. Senior US intelligence officials were aware that al-Qaeda operatives were present in the country, yet they were not arrested.[242] The brother of a White House staff member withdrew investments on September 10, knowing that their value would plummet within 24 hours. The attacks themselves coincided with US military exercises that would have been known only to a select few. Numerous members of the administration were members of a think tank that had previously written of the need for a *'new Pearl Harbor'* in order to enact a radical new foreign policy. Though this policy was portrayed as being in the interests of the United States, key aspects were indistinguishable from Israeli strategic aims that had been outlined decades earlier. 9/11 was, in effect, a false flag event intended to serve as the catalyst for these objectives to be carried out. It would not be the first time that Israel was involved in such an operation.

In 1916, with Britain on the verge of a catastrophic defeat to Germany in the First World War, the World Zionist

Organisation approached Downing Street with an offer. In return for Britain's assistance in the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine - then an Ottoman territory - the WZO would lobby for the United States to enter the conflict.[243] Britain took the WZO up on its offer and immediately began discussions with France on the eventual partition of the Ottoman Empire. The US subsequently entered WWI in April 1917. That November, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour issued a declaration to leading Zionist Lord Rothschild, guaranteeing Britain's support in the establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle East.

Following World War II and the subsequent establishment of Israel in 1948, Britain's military presence in the region became vital to the security of the fledgling state. Egypt, Jordan, and Syria had declared war on Israel upon its creation. After months of fighting, an armistice was declared in early 1949, though no diplomatic relations were established between either side. Egypt, as the most militarily powerful Arab country, became the main regional threat to Israel. However, this was offset by a garrison of British troops stationed in Egypt's northeast Suez Canal region. This British presence effectively acted as a buffer that prevented another Egyptian invasion of Israel.

In 1952, a revolution took place in Egypt, and a new Arab nationalist government came to power. Anti-British sentiment in the country was rife. Britain, having lost its status as a leading world power following the end of World War II, gave serious consideration to withdrawing from the North African country. This would have left Israel isolated in the region. In response, Israel's military intelligence unit, Aman, devised a plan intended to make Downing Street reconsider its options.

Operation Susannah involved the recruitment of Egyptian Jews to plant explosive devices in cinemas, libraries, and US-owned educational centres. The ensuing blasts were to be blamed on the Muslim Brotherhood and Egyptian com-

munists, which would lead to instability in the country.[244] This would result in Britain having to maintain its presence at the Suez Canal. The targeting of American institutions would lead to greater US involvement in the region, also.

The Egyptian Jews who were recruited for Operation Susannah were known in Israeli intelligence circles as *Sayanim*. This is the Hebrew word for 'helpers'. Sayanim became a term used by Mossad for Jewish civilians who provided assistance to the agency out of a sense of devotion to Israel.[245]

In July 1954, bombs detonated at a number of locations throughout Cairo and Alexandria. No casualties occurred as the blasts took place when the sites were empty. After several weeks of explosions, a conspirator was arrested after a device he was carrying detonated prematurely while he was on the way to bomb a cinema in Cairo. The entire Israeli-Egyptian cell unravelled rapidly as a result, and all members were subsequently arrested. Two committed suicide while in prison awaiting trial, two were executed by hanging, another two were acquitted, and the remaining six members received sentences ranging from seven years to life imprisonment. All would be released as part of an Egyptian-Israeli prisoner exchange in 1968. The incident led to great controversy in Israel and became known as the Lavon Affair, after Israeli defence minister Pinhas Lavon, who resigned in its aftermath.

In 1956, Egypt's government, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, nationalised the Suez Canal and forbade Israeli shipping from passing through. In response, Israel launched an invasion of Egypt. They were joined by Britain and France, who quickly withdrew when it became apparent that they would not receive US support. The short-lived Suez Crisis marked the end of London and Paris's pursuit of a foreign policy that was independent of the United States. To maintain its presence in the region, Israel soon realised that it would have to rely on US support instead.

On June 5, 1967, Israel launched Operation Focus, which involved mass air strikes against the air force fleets of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. A war subsequently began between both sides. Amidst the fighting, a US spy ship, the USS *Liberty*, was positioned in international waters off the Sinai Peninsula, monitoring communications from Israel, the Arab states, and their Soviet allies.[246]

Four days into the conflict, on June 8, the USS *Liberty* came under attack from Israeli fighter jets and torpedo boats. After a sustained onslaught involving rockets, napalm, and torpedoes, 34 US servicemen were dead and another 171 were injured. As a surveillance ship, the USS *Liberty* was only lightly armed and had little to defend itself with. Israel apologised for the attack and claimed that it had mistaken the *Liberty* for an Egyptian ship. This was quickly called into question.

In the hours prior to the attacks, Israeli planes had flown over the USS *Liberty* and acknowledged that it was a US vessel. A large American flag was present on the *Liberty* as well as its official US Navy markings. At one stage, an Israeli plane was so close to the *Liberty* that its co-pilot was able to wave at the crew members.[247]

Indeed, when the assault began, Israeli pilots informed their superiors that it was a US ship, but were ordered to attack anyway.[248] This was picked up by an overhead NSA plane, and transmitted to CIA stations. One Israeli pilot refused to carry out a strike on the clearly identifiable US ship and returned to his airbase. He was arrested upon arrival for insubordination.[249]

The USS *Liberty* was eventually able to radio in a distress signal to two US aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean. Eight US fighter jets were despatched in order to defend the stricken vessel. However, when news of this development reached Washington, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered their immediate return to base. US Presi-

dent Lyndon B. Johnson was said to have stated that he did not care if the USS *Liberty* sank if it meant not embarrassing Israel.[250] However, crew members had noted that none of the attacking jets bore markings that would have identified their country of origin.[251]

As well as the jets despatched to defend the USS *Liberty*, a number of other American planes were also recalled to base. These aircraft were not en route to the *Liberty*. US military officials, having been informed of the attack, had activated contingency plans to launch retaliatory strikes on Cairo.[252] The lack of identifying insignias on the Israeli jets had led to the assumption that Egypt was responsible, rather than a supposed US ally.

The Israeli torpedo boats involved in the attack did bear identifying markings. They arrived after the aerial stage of the assault. Radio transcripts show that Israeli Air Force commanders were aware at this stage that the *USS Liberty* was a US vessel.[253] Despite this confirmation, the Israelis fired torpedoes at the USS *Liberty* after an exchange of machine gun fire. Only one torpedo struck the *Liberty*. It blasted a 39-foot hole open on the ship's starboard side and instantly killed twenty crew members.[254] If the other torpedoes had struck the vessel, it is likely that the USS *Liberty* would have sunk and all or most crew members would have been killed. Had that happened, there would be few or no witnesses to recount how the ship had been previously identified by Israeli aircraft, or that the planes that took part in the attack had no identifying markings. The Israeli boats also fired upon life rafts that had been placed in the water by *Liberty* crew members.[255] The motor boat that fired the fatal missile at the USS *Liberty* later had its wheel and bell placed on display at the Israeli naval museum in Haifa.[256]

The conflict between Israel and its Arab rivals ended two days after the attack on the USS *Liberty*, leading it to be known as the Six-Day War. At the end of the fighting, Israel had annexed the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt,

the Golan Heights from Syria, and East Jerusalem and the wider West Bank from Jordan. Had the United States intervened militarily against Egypt in response to the attack on the USS *Liberty*, it would have aligned with Israeli strategic interests, much like the Iraq War decades later. Owing to Egypt's ties to the Soviet Union, it may have also sparked a nuclear war. Israeli operations that could have resulted in US military interventions have also taken place in the modern era.

In 2012, *Foreign Policy* magazine featured an article, aptly entitled *False Flag*. It revealed how in the final years of the Bush presidency, Mossad had attempted to develop links with the Iranian militant group Jundallah.[257]

Jundallah had been established in 2003 in the southeast Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchestan. Bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan. Sistan and Baluchestan are predominantly Sunni, and home to the Baluch ethnic minority. Iran is majority Shia, and ethnically Persian. Sparking an ethnic and religious divide in Iran would have mirrored Israeli strategy in Iraq and Syria.

At the time of the *Foreign Policy* article, Jundallah had carried out a number of attacks in Iran. These included an attempt on the life of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005,[258] a 2009 suicide bombing of a Shia mosque in Sistan and Baluchestan that killed 30 people,[259] and another suicide bombing in 2010 that resulted in 39 deaths.[260] Israel had also begun using another Iranian group, the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK), to assassinate Iran's nuclear scientists.[261] In January 2012, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshadi, an official at Iran's Natanz facility, was killed in Tehran after a motorcyclist placed an explosive device on his car.[262] Israel's use of these proxy groups was met with uncharacteristic pushback from the United States.

In Mossad's dealings with Jundallah, the intelligence agency did not divulge its Israeli identity to the Sunni fun-

damentalist group. Instead, the Israeli agents had posed as American CIA operatives. This included a meeting held with the group in London.[263]

Had Iran been led to believe that US intelligence was orchestrating terrorist attacks on its soil, this would have invited retaliation upon American interests in the region by Tehran, sparking a conflict between both sides. George W. Bush, in spite of already launching a war in Iraq that aligned with Israeli interests, was reported to have *'went absolutely ballistic'* upon being informed that Israeli intelligence had posed as Americans in their dealings with Jundallah.[264]

As well as Israeli involvement in false flag operations to provoke US military interventions against its regional rivals, Israel has also taken part in false flag operations in order to advance its own independent foreign policy.

On October 7, 2023, the al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, launched Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, the largest military incursion into Israel since Egypt and Syria's 1973 invasion. The 50th anniversary of that attack had occurred just one day beforehand. After a delayed Israeli response, clashes took place throughout southern Israel and the Gaza border. By the end of the day, almost 1,200 Israelis had been killed and hundreds had been taken captive by Hamas.[265]

Israel subsequently began an aerial bombardment campaign against Gaza. A blockade was also imposed on the strip and all food, water, electricity and fuel were prohibited from entering the Hamas-governed territory. This was announced by Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant, who described enemy combatants as *'human animals'*.[266] In response to this move, Israeli energy minister Israel Katz stated that *'This is what the nation of child killers deserve'*.[267] This was reiterated by Israeli President Isaac Herzog, who said *'it's an entire nation out there that is responsible. It is not true, this rhetoric about civilians who were not aware and not*

involved. It is absolutely not true'.[268] Upon the subsequent ground invasion of Gaza later that month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invoked the Torah passage of Amalek, understood in an Israeli cultural context as a call for the complete destruction of the Palestinian people.[269]

In September 2025, these statements were included as evidence in a 72-page UN report that concluded that Israel's ensuing onslaught on the beleaguered strip had constituted a genocide.[270] Amnesty International,[271] the International Association of Genocide Scholars,[272] and Israeli organisations B'Tselem[273] & Physicians for Human Rights Israel[274] had also all come to the conclusion that Israel had intentionally tried to exterminate the population of Gaza. In October 2025, a tentative ceasefire agreement ended two years of violence. At this stage, 67,000 Palestinians lay dead from forced starvation and Israeli air strikes.[275]

The government of Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that this was a necessary response to the October 7 attacks and Hamas' capture of Israeli citizens on that day. However, owing to Israel's advanced intelligence and surveillance infrastructure, questions arose about how October 7 could have occurred in the first place.

On October 9, the *Associated Press* featured an article on Israel's supposed intelligence failures in the lead-up to the attack. An Egyptian intelligence official revealed that Egypt, which has acted as a mediator between Israel and Hamas, had repeatedly warned Israel about *'something big'* in the run-up to October 7, but these warnings had seemingly gone unheeded.[276] This was reiterated by Michael McCaul, chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, in a press conference on October 11. McCaul told reporters that one of these Egyptian warnings had come just three days before October 7.[277]

On October 13, *The New York Times*[278] and *CNN*[279] both carried reports outlining how the CIA and wider US intelli-

gence community had warned Israel of an impending attack in the weeks prior to October 7. The *CNN* report also cited an unidentified Arab official and Middle Eastern diplomat based in Washington, D.C. who had both warned Israel and the US that an attack was imminent. By November 2023, even Israeli media had begun to question whether its intelligence services had prior knowledge of the events of October 7.

On November 20, Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* featured an interview with female Israeli troops who had been tasked with monitoring the surveillance cameras placed in Gaza.[280] Even the slightest irregularity in routines had to be logged as part of this role. The Israeli spotters recounted how they had recorded numerous instances of Hamas preparing for October 7. These included attempts to knock out cameras, the use of vans and motorcycles, and even rehearsals for the shelling of tanks.[281] These reports were passed onto senior commanders, who seemingly ignored them.

Ten days after the *Haaretz* report was published, a *New York Times* report confirmed what was quickly becoming apparent. Israel had obtained Hamas' attack plans for October 7 over a year in advance. The article also revealed that the Israeli Defense Ministry had highlighted Hamas' intentions to '*move the next confrontation into Israeli territory*' as far back as 2016.[282]

That Israel, a highly security conscious state, was clearly aware of Hamas' intentions to launch a large-scale assault, yet did not take measures to prepare for such an eventuality, simply beggars belief. Even more questions arise when it comes to the Supernova electronic music festival. Held on the Gaza border, the festival was the scene of 378 deaths on October 7.[283] However, an October 8 article in entertainment magazine *Billboard* revealed that Supernova had only been moved to this location on October 5 after another location in southern Israel had fallen through.[284]

One year prior to October 7, in August 2022, violent clashes took place in Gaza after a commander of Palestinian Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades was assassinated in an Israeli air strike. Fighting took place for three days before an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire ended hostilities. At this stage, 49 Palestinians had been killed[285] and almost 1,000 rockets had been fired at Israel.[286] That there were no insurance or security concerns over holding a music festival in direct proximity to Gaza just over a year later, when Israel was aware of Hamas' intentions to launch an assault, is simply unfathomable. Indeed, a *Rolling Stone* article from October 15 interviewed attendees of Supernova who had expressed concern about the choice of location beforehand.[287]

In December 2023, law professors Robert J. Jackson, Jr. of New York University and Joshua Mitts of Columbia University published a paper entitled *Trading on Terror?*. It outlined how in the days prior to October 7, there was an exponential surge in short-selling on the Israeli stock market. Average weekly short volumes of just over 1,000 had soared to over 200,000 in the week beginning October 2.[288] A similar figure had been recorded in April 2023, before the Passover holiday.[289] A November 2023 *Times of Israel* report revealed that this was when Hamas' October 7 attack had been originally planned for. The article also outlined how Israeli military intelligence officers had raised the possibility of a Hamas attack one month before October 7, but these concerns had been dismissed by senior officers.[290]

The suspicious trading activity prior to October 7 bears a stark similarity to the high volume of put options placed on the parent companies of American and United Airlines in the days prior to September 11. Robert J. Jackson, Jr. was a former commissioner of the US Securities and Exchange Commission which had previously investigated the pre-9/11 insider trading.

As Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip continued, even more information came to light that raised questions about

the events of October 7. In April 2024, the *Times of Israel* featured an interview with Haim Rubinstein, a Tel Aviv media adviser who had previously worked for the Israeli political party Yesh Atid. Upon the launch of the October 7 attacks, Rubinstein had immediately offered his services to the families of the Israelis who had been taken captive, and became the spokesman for what would become known as the Hostages and Missing Families Forum.

Rubinstein stepped down from this role in March 2024, citing frustrations in the Forum's dealings with the Israeli government. Benjamin Netanyahu had not met with the hostages' families until October 15. After a protest by the Forum in Tel Aviv, another meeting was held with the Israeli Prime Minister on October 26.[291]

According to Rubinstein, it was apparent following this meeting that Netanyahu's focus was on the destruction of Hamas, rather than the safe return of the hostages. Revealingly, Rubinstein also disclosed that the Forum had later been informed that Hamas had offered to release all civilian captives on the 9th or 10th of October, in return for Israel not launching a ground invasion of Gaza.[292] This offer was rejected by the Israeli government. Two years of slaughter could have been two days of clashes. Even more damning information would come to light on the events of October 7.

In July 2024, *Haaretz* revealed that the Hannibal Directive had been used on October 7.[293] The Hannibal Directive is an Israeli military protocol in which Israeli troops are instructed to fire upon their own soldiers in order to prevent them from being taken captive. Hamas operatives and Israelis alike had been mown down by machine guns and missiles fired from Apache helicopter gunships on the day.[294] Merkava tanks also shelled buildings where hostages were held.[295] Israelis were killed whom Hamas would have been willing to release in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.[296] This was the aim of an operation that Israel had the necessary intelligence to prevent from happening in the first

place. In July 2025, an Israeli artillery soldier testified before a Knesset hearing that early in the morning of October 7, a *'strange order'* came through on the radio to delay standard patrols of the Gaza border.[297] The attacks began over an hour later, having effectively been allowed to take place.

In March 2023, seven months before October 7, Israeli minister Orit Strock, responsible for the development of settlements in the occupied territories, called Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza a 'sin'. Strock was speaking on the repeal of legislation that had ordered the dismantlement of four Israeli settlements in the West Bank. This was hailed by Strock as a step towards the eventual Israeli re-settlement of Gaza, a move that would involve 'many casualties', in line with the genocide that would begin seven months later.[298]

The October 7 attacks served as a pretext for Israel to pursue an expansionist regional policy. Much like the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, carried out with Israeli assistance, served as a pretext for the Israel-centric US foreign policy that followed.

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